

Testimony of Chanda C. Peters
Eligibility Interviewer of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
before the
Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity
House Committee on Financial Services
July 1, 2003

Good Morning Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you my personal testimony on this very important issue – Section 8 Housing Assistance Program and the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. These two programs have not only changed my life but also my children's lives dramatically for the better. My grandmother moved into the Eastchester Gardens Housing developments located in the Bronx, New York in the early 1950's. My mother grew up there and I also grew up there.

Due to my mother's illness I (an only child) was raised on welfare, so life was not easy for us. After an extremely abusive marriage I left New York with my 3 daughters and moved to Los Angeles where I started my life all over again. With very little money, no job and having to start all over I *had* to get on public assistance (first welfare, and then Section 8) because I simply could not afford to pay rent, utilities, and the high cost childcare.

Then one day I received an invitation to participate in the Gain program (Greater Avenues for Independence) where they pay for your school tuition, books, supplies, travel, and most importantly your **childcare expenses**. I immediately signed up and registered at the Los Angeles Trade Technical College where I took computer classes, and office procedures. Shortly after I received another invitation to participate in the Family Self-Sufficiency program where they assist you with career goals, such as providing you with educational development, technical, trade and vocational training, job counseling as well as other services to help you to become self-sufficient and become a homeowner! Again I signed up!

The FSS program especially changed my life for the better because through their partnerships with other agencies I was able to utilize their facilities for studying and had access to their computers to do my homework assignments. The job counseling was **extremely** valuable and motivated me to reach my goals. To this day, I still use those skills for interviews for promotions that I seek.

After completing Gain, I worked for temp agencies all over downtown Los Angeles, until I was hired permanently, and I have been employed ever since!

I can't begin to express to you how important these programs and others that help, encourage, inspire and support needy families to live in decent housing and get out of a situation that to many may seem hopeless.

This is how my life has been since:

- **Utilized the tools and services needed to upgrade my computer and office skills preparing myself for the job market**

- **Completed 2 year Gain program and am now gainfully employed full-time since 1997, no longer on public assistance of any kind**
- **Completed Family Self-Sufficiency program receiving over \$14,000 - I am now a proud homeowner of a beautiful 2 bedroom 2 ½ bath townhouse located in Inglewood, CA**
- **I have two daughters attending UCLA (studying law) and UC Riverside (studying veterinary medicine), my youngest attends University High – they all have high self-esteem because of my example – where I always tell them to reach for their dreams**
- **I am now employed with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles as an Eligibility Interviewer helping other families with housing assistance**
- **My mother no longer lives in Eastchester Gardens, I have moved her here closer to her loved ones breaking a family cycle of public assistance**

Every single day when I go to work, and when I return home, I'm so very thankful for those programs. I truly enjoy my job and I especially enjoy helping others. It is my hope and prayer that these programs continue to assist other families to becoming self-sufficient.

Thank you for allowing me to give you my testimony and I especially thank the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.